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Le Pistolet Fumant

WASHINGTON

As someone certain in 1973 that Watergate would blow over, I now offer France's President, François Mitterrand, this list of Ten Ways to Ride Out the Storm.

1. *Disabuse yourself of the assumption that "Watergate cannot happen here."* For years, we heard Frenchmen say that Richard Nixon's transgressions would rate no more than a shrug in national-security-conscious France. But when venality combined with stupidity hits home, it hits hard, and its impact could dislodge a President in Paris as well as Washington.

2. *Remember that, for the chief of state, the cover-up is always worse than the crime.* No prior knowledge of the original crime did not help President Nixon, and it will not help you; concern yourself with bringing high-level culprits to justice, lest criminality in protecting them touches you.

3. *Stop minimizing the original crime.* That only focuses more attention on the cover-up; instead, get furious at the original attack on the Rainbow Warrior. Cut out this "absurd crime" nonsense, which smacks of the Nixonian "third-rate burglary" misconception. Let others talk cynically of the humiliation of being caught — demonstrate that you understand what is really shameful, and become incensed at the moral blindness of the bomb plotters.

4. *Get ready to accurately answer the question "Who ordered the mission? What did François Mitterrand know and when did he know it?"* If you and your closest Government advisers were not involved, be prepared to struggle with the French military, part of which was involved in an act that cannot be sanctioned by the state. Remember President de Gaulle's admonition to the generals: "You are not the army's army, you are France's army." (If you knew of the plot beforehand, and hold *le pistolet fumant* — the smoking gun — absolve the military in a farewell address.)

10 hints for Mitterrand on Greenpeace

5. *Resist the temptation to label the furor a plot by the anti-nuclearites to bring you down, or a scheme by right-wing generals to embarrass your Government by deliberately blundering.* Nixonites tried blaming the Democrats for "setting us up" at the Watergate break-in, and nobody believed it. That counterattack only adds to the blood lust of the attackers.

6. *Resign yourself to a dramatic trial of your agents in New Zealand in November, followed by the interminable parliamentary inquiry.* It suits both rightists and Communists to drag this out, discrediting you. Do not show weakness by complaining of "groveling in Greenpeace."

7. *Do not attack the media too early.* Now is the heyday of long-repressed French journalism, with everyone on the right out to catch up with *Le Monde*. You must allow the media their day of glory; time enough later to make them the villains. Remember the rhythm: interest, fever, hysteria, boredom, backlash.

8. *Do not blame people for demanding the delicious details of high-level scandal.* It is only human for the French to want to know everything from the ordeal of Capt. Dominique Prieur in her New Zealand cell, to the bamboozling of the investigator Bernard Tricot, to the loss of Admiral Lacoste's chemise. Books and movies are yet to come, with intimate details that will curl your hair, as pöls and spooks learn to sell rights to wrongs.

9. *Do not make all your spoors your scapegoats.* Your unfortunate purge of rightists in the secret service, like our own "Halloween massacre," removed much experienced talent, but French Intelligence is not a pack of bumbling dirty tricksters. Not only did they recently uncover the K.G.B. document detailing the theft of technology from the West, but it was the French (not the British, as reported here) who this year tipped off the U.S. that the typewriters in our Moscow embassy were wired to transmit our most secret communications to the K.G.B. Don't run down your good agents.

10. *Suffer with pride.* Only democracies have consciences. Dictatorships are not embarrassed at revelations of abuses of government power. The Russians rape Afghanistan, Syria razes Hama, Libya murders dissidents abroad, with no sense of shame. But the U.S. forces out a President over the cover-up of a break-in, Israel punishes itself for indirect responsibility of a massacre of Moslems by Christians, and France's public first becomes aroused at bungling, and then — the free world hopes — more honorably angered at the murderous excess of force used by its Government in suppressing dissent.

These may be terrible times at Elysée Palace, but this can turn out to be a great moment to be a citizen of France. □